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The Quest for Ethiopian Peace

BY VERA MICHELES DEAN

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IN A report published on February 12, the oil experts' committee of the League of Nations declared that an oil embargo applied by all League states would curb Italy in three and a half months, provided the United States limited its oil exports to the pre-1935 level. Should the United States fail to limit exports, said the report, the only effect of a League embargo would be to render the purchase of oil more difficult and expensive for Italy.

The League report squarely raised the problems confronting Washington and Geneva. On February 18 the American Senate, following the example set by the House on the previous day, voted to extend the neutrality resolution of August 31, 1935 to May 1, 1937. This resolution makes no provision for limitation of exports of raw materials to belligerents. Will the League states, under these circumstances, impose an oil embargo and take the risk that it may provoke Italian retaliation; or will they use the threat of oil sanctions to obtain Mussolini's approval of some new peace plan?

These questions are particularly urgent at a moment when a major battle on the northern Ethiopian front is reported to have ended on February 15 with a smashing Italian victory and the occupation of Amba Aradam, a fortified town which dominates the Enderta region and controls the only good route toward Tembien. News of this battle has aroused rumors that Italy—which in spite of a powerful military machine, using tanks and airplanes and backed by a motorized supply service, had hitherto occupied only frontier regions in the north, south and southeast—might now force Ethiopia to accept a peace settlement more harsh than the Hoare-Laval deal.

This deal was justified by its sponsors on the ground that, had it not been for League interference, Ethiopia might have fared even worse; and that Italy—no matter how much it may have violated its international obligations—has "legitimate" need of markets, raw materials and population

outlets, which no country except a browbeaten Ethiopia would be willing to provide. The principal argument, however, made in defense of the Hoare-Laval plan was that a "negotiated" peace would prove less disastrous for the world than the complete collapse of one or other belligerent, which might either lead to communism in Italy or else encourage fascism to expand in Africa at the expense of France or Britain. Neither eventuality was calculated to reassure the French and British governments, which agreed that the real foe of European peace is not Italy but Nazi Germany. Their dilemma was that every concession made by League powers to end war in Ethiopia and draw Italy back into the European concert would merely convince the Nazis that aggression brings substantial rewards. Yet in December 1935 France and Britain were not prepared to adopt the alternative of more drastic sanctions like an oil embargo, which might conceivably terminate the Ethiopian conflict but might also fan that conflict into a European war. Faced by this complex situation, Sir Samuel Hoare and M. Laval, while paying lip service to the League, drafted a peace plan denounced throughout the world as a betrayal of League principles.

The genesis of the Hoare-Laval deal may be traced at least as far back as the middle of October, when peace negotiations were opened between Rome, Paris and London. Reports of these negotiations were at first categorically denied at the Quai d'Orsay, and dismissed by British Ministers as "wild accusations."¹ It would appear, however, that on October 16 Signor Cerruti, Italian Ambassador in Paris, gave M. Laval the outline of a settlement acceptable to Mussolini, and that the French Prime Minister conveyed this information to the British government. The Mussolini plan, as far as can be ascertained, contemplated separation of the Amharic portions of Ethiopia, which were to remain

1. *The Times* (London), October 25, 1935.

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under the rule of Haile Selassie, from the non-Amharic territories, to be controlled by Italy; Italian sovereignty over the province of Tigré; disarmament of Ethiopia and guarantees of security for Italy's East African colonies; assurance by Italy that it would not recruit native troops and would merely maintain a limited police force; and a free zone for Ethiopia in the Italian port of Assab.²

Mussolini's proposals were examined in Paris by Mr. Maurice Peterson, head of the Abyssinian department of the British Foreign Office, and his French colleague, M. de Saint-Quentin. They apparently agreed that the Italian suggestions could not be reconciled with the League Covenant, would be rejected by Addis Ababa, and consequently could not be recommended to the League as a basis of discussion. The experts then sought a solution acceptable not only to Italy but to the League and Ethiopia. No agreement was reached, nor did their tentative proposals meet with a favorable reception in Rome.³

The failure of peace negotiations left the League states no alternative but to proceed with the application of sanctions. When the Coordination Committee, charged with this task, assembled at Geneva on November 1, M. Laval told Sir Samuel Hoare that France would loyally carry out its obligations and, in return, received Britain's assurance that no opportunity of negotiating a settlement would be neglected. The two countries, moreover, agreed not to act without previous consultation, so as to remove the divergences which had repeatedly characterized their policies during the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.⁴ The Franco-British conversations were hailed in some quarters as evidence of closer cooperation between the two countries.

This impression was strengthened on November 2, when M. Laval told the Coordination Committee that the League powers "must seek as quickly as possible for an agreed solution of the conflict," and that the French and British governments believed they must be "equally active in this direction."⁵ His statement, received "with subdued applause,"⁶ was followed by that of Sir Samuel Hoare, who admitted that conversations regarding a peace settlement had taken place but had proved inconclusive. "There is nothing mysterious or sin-

ister about these discussions," he added. "Nothing is farther from our minds than to make and conclude an agreement behind the back of the League. Nothing is farther from our minds than to make an agreement that is not acceptable to all three parties in the controversy."⁷

THE LEAGUE "MANDATE" TO FRANCE AND BRITAIN

Ostensibly to formalize these peace negotiations and bring them within the framework of the Covenant, M. Van Zeeland, the Belgian Prime Minister, suggested that France and Britain should receive a mandate from the Coordination Committee to continue their mediation on behalf of the League. If this were done, he said, "the moral position of the League would be still further strengthened, and . . . the chances of peace would be increased."⁸ This proposal created uneasiness among some delegates.⁹ The Polish delegate, M. Komarnicki, pointed out that the Coordination Committee could not confer "a formal mandate" on France and Britain, "the Council being the only body competent to deal with the substance of the problem."¹⁰ No attempt, however, was made to put the Belgian proposal to a vote. The chairman, M. de Vasconcellos of Portugal, merely said he felt he was speaking for the Coordination Committee in stating that its members "note the hope expressed by the first delegate of Belgium and give it their full approval."¹¹ Silence was apparently interpreted as consent.

Before acquiescing in M. Van Zeeland's suggestion, the Coordination Committee had passed a resolution providing that the embargo on exports of certain raw materials and the boycott on Italian products should go into effect on November 18.¹² On November 4 the economic sub-committee of the Coordination Committee discussed a proposal presented by Mr. W. A. Riddell, the Canadian delegate, for extension of the embargo on raw materials to oil, coal, iron and steel. This proposal was adopted in principle and referred to a drafting committee. The Committee of Eighteen agreed on November 6 that an embargo should be placed on these products as soon as the conditions necessary to render it effective had been realized—that is, when it could be shown that non-members of the League, notably Germany and the United

2. *Ibid.*; Jules Sauerwein, *Paris-Soir* (Paris), October 24, 1935; *Giornale d'Italia* (Rome), October 25, 1935.

3. *The Times*, November 1, 1935.

4. *Ibid.*, November 2, 1935.

5. League of Nations, *Dispute between Ethiopia and Italy, Coordination of Measures under Article XVI of the Covenant, Coordination Committee, Minutes of the Second Session, October 31—November 2, 1935*, Coordination Committee 100, Geneva, November 15, 1935, p. 5.

6. *The Times*, November 4, 1935.

7. League of Nations, *Coordination Committee, Minutes of the Second Session, October 31—November 2, 1935*, cited, p. 6.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

9. *The Times*, November 4, 1935.

10. League of Nations, *Coordination Committee, Minutes of the Second Session, October 31—November 2, 1935*, cited, p. 8.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

States, would not profit by such an embargo to increase exports of prohibited materials to Italy.¹³

The League's decision to apply economic sanctions against Italy was greeted throughout the world as a victory for the system of collective security and as the first concerted effort to stop and penalize aggression. This gratification was short-lived. The British Labor party was already predicting that the Baldwin government—if returned to power in the general elections of November 14—would betray the League, sponsor an imperialist deal with Italy at Ethiopia's expense, and place its reliance not on the collective system but on increased armaments and separate alliances. Sir Samuel Hoare categorically denied these rumors on November 4, saying it was a pity that "a great party should adopt the methods of Titus Oates and the Popish Plot."¹⁴ Throughout the pre-election campaign, which centered on issues of foreign policy, government supporters assured the electorate that the cabinet would continue to support the collective system and seek a settlement acceptable to the League as well as Italy and Ethiopia. In an address to the International Peace Society on October 31, Mr. Baldwin pointed out that a policy of isolation was no longer possible. "The motive of self-interest," he said, "if nothing else, urges us away from such a policy. A cooperative effort for peace in which we play our part is not quixotism, it is not an idealistic desire to be the policemen of the world, it is plain common sense, applied to the facts of things as they are." He admitted the possibility that the League might eventually have to use force. "Its creators knew that it was not sufficient to desire peace; it might become necessary to enforce it. . . . We mean nothing by the League if we are not prepared, in the end, and after grave and careful trial, to take action to enforce its judgment."¹⁵

There is little doubt that the government's championship of the collective system rallied to its side thousands of voters who, in the League of Nations Union ballot of June 1935, had indicated their desire for continued British participation in the League, for economic sanctions against an aggressor and, in more limited numbers, for military sanctions. The government's victory at the polls on November 14, when it lost the phenomenal

majority it had received in the panic elections of 1931 but obtained a safe margin of 247 in the House of Commons, was generally expected to be followed by drastic sanctions, in the hope not only of weakening Italy, but of bringing war to a close.

PROTEST FROM ITALY

On November 12, on the eve of British elections, the Italian government dispatched a note to all League states which had voted for sanctions, protesting against their action.¹⁶ In this note Italy contended that the arguments presented in its memorandum of September 4 to the League Council had not received sufficient consideration, and that the relevant provisions of the Covenant had not been applied to the conflict. It denied the "legal and moral basis" of the League decision, and pointed out that numerous Ethiopian communities, led by their civil and religious authorities, had since placed themselves under Italy's protection; that the Italian government had abolished slavery in the occupied territory and had given 16,000 slaves "the liberty for which they would have looked in vain to the government of Addis Ababa." The League states, it declared, should take cognizance of these new facts and draw the necessary conclusions. "Among the latter it is undeniable that new obligations of protection devolve upon Italy by reason of the attitude of the peoples who have placed their faith in her and who would be dedicated to terrible reprisals and revenge should Italian protection come to an end." The note contended that the Coordination Committee was "not by any means an organ of the League of Nations." The various League states consequently remained "individually judges" and were responsible to Italy "both as regards the scope of the measures which they adopt and as regards their legal justification."¹⁷

The application of sanctions, continued the Italian note, "far from facilitating the termination of the conflict and promoting the settlement thereof in the spirit of the Covenant, adds to its gravity and threatens to prolong its duration." It pointed out that such sanctions had never been applied in previous conflicts "which had developed under much more serious conditions." They would "thus be applied for the first time against Italy under *de facto* and *de jure* conditions which the Italian government and people regard as unjust and arbitrary and against which therefore Italy, under the circumstances, would be obliged to adopt economic and financial measures" which might involve "substantial deviations from the present currents of ex-

13. League of Nations, *Dispute between Ethiopia and Italy, Coordination of Measures under Article XVI of the Covenant, Coordination Committee, Committee of Eighteen, Proposals and Resolutions Adopted during the Second Session (October 31—November 6, 1935)*, Coordination Committee 97, Geneva, November 7, 1935, p. 3.

14. *The Times*, November 5, 1935.

15. For full text of Mr. Baldwin's speech, cf. *ibid.*, November 1, 1935.

16. For complete text, cf. *Corriere della Sera* (Rome), November 13, 1935; *The Times*, November 13, 1935.

17. For discussion of the legal question involved, cf. R. L. Buell, "The Weakness of Peace Machinery," *Foreign Policy Reports*, September 14, 1932.

change and trade, in order to obtain all that is required for the life of the nation. The prohibition of all Italian exports is more than an economic measure; it is a veritable act of hostility, which amply justifies the inevitable Italian counter-measures . . . The artificial attempt to exclude from the world economy a market of 44,000,000 souls runs the risk of drying up immediately and surely the sources of sustenance and life of millions of workers all the world over."

If the Italian note was intended to drive a wedge between the League states, especially France and Britain, and extract individual replies modifying or alleviating the League's decision, it failed to achieve the desired results. True, Britain did not succeed in its original plan of delivering a collective reply from Geneva. But the answers of the French and British governments, dispatched following consultation and published on November 22, were substantially similar in character. The British note¹⁸ stated that "His Majesty's Government feel bound to emphasize that, having themselves taken part in the discussions at Geneva, they are in a position to bear witness to the constant anxiety evidenced alike by the Council, the Assembly and by the other organs of the League of Nations, fully conscious as they have been of the gravity of their responsibilities, to carry out their duties in a spirit of impartiality and to concede the utmost possible weight to the legitimate interests of Italy." No useful purpose would consequently be served by reopening the discussion. The note pointed out that, at Geneva, the League states had been "confronted with the task of applying provisions of the Covenant which are mandatory in character to facts which were not in dispute." To Italy's hint that League states retained individual judgment, the note replied that "His Majesty's Government, in subscribing to the Covenant, did not, indeed, abandon or renounce their own free and sovereign judgment, but undertook to exercise it thenceforth in accordance with the obligations of that instrument. No other attitude is open to them, and they would naturally desire to see the Italian Government place a similar construction on their own adhesion to the Covenant."

The French note,¹⁹ warmer in tone than the British, stressed France's friendship for Italy and its unrelenting efforts to find a peaceful solution of the conflict. It declared, however, that "to have repudiated the obligations of the Covenant would have been to compromise seriously for the future the possibilities of applying provisions which con-

stitute an essential element of the collective security assured to the members of the League."

ITALIAN COUNTER-SANCTIONS

Having failed to shake the League's decision on sanctions, Italy proceeded to measures of retaliation. The Fascist Grand Council, meeting on November 17, voted to consider November 18—the day sanctions went into effect—as "a date of ignominy and iniquity in the history of the world"; denounced League sanctions, "never before applied, as a plan to suffocate the Italian people economically and as a vain effort to humiliate it, in order to prevent it from realizing its ideals and defending its *raison d'être*"; invited all Italians to hang out flags as if it were a national holiday; ordered a stone record of the "siege" to be sculptured on the buildings of all Italian communes "so that the enormous injustice perpetrated against Italy, to which the civilization of all continents owes so much, may remain on record through the centuries"; and expressed its sympathy to those states which, by refusing to apply sanctions, had aided "the cause of peace and interpreted the spirit of the peoples."²⁰

On November 18 the Italian government applied counter-sanctions of a practical character when it published a decree providing that special licenses would henceforth have to be obtained for the importation of 197 specified commodities from countries imposing sanctions on Italy.²¹ These included not only raw materials already embargoed by the League—rubber, zinc, various metals and minerals—but also articles not yet on the League's blacklist, such as cotton, raw silk, textiles and certain foodstuffs, notably butter and wheat. Imports from countries which either did not participate in sanctions, or else were applying them with qualifications, were to be admitted on the basis of a percentage of customs receipts for a specified period of the previous year. Payment of imports from sanctionist countries was to be made in lire to the Foreign Exchange Institute, which was to pay them into blocked, non-interest-bearing accounts. Exports to sanctionist countries were to be allowed only when a credit in payment of goods, confirmed in Italy, had been opened in behalf of the exporter, or when the price had already been paid and transferred to Italy, and special permission had been obtained from the competent government authorities. The decree prohibited export of certain pro-

18. For complete text, cf. *The Times*, November 23, 1935.

19. For complete text, cf. *ibid.*, November 23, 1935; *Le Temps*, November 24, 1935.

20. *Corriere della Sera*, November 18, 1935.

21. *Ibid.*, November 19, 1935. Cf. also the Association of Italian Corporations, *Business and Financial Report, A Monthly Survey of Italian Trade and Industry*, December 1, 1935.

ducts from Italy, including rye, barley, corn, vegetables, olive oil residue, furs, mineral ores, metals, certain woods, skins and hides, a series of chemical products, rubber tires, rags and bran. On November 10 the government had already decreed regulation of trade in mineral oils,²² and had raised the price of gasoline to curb private consumption.

In a further effort to conserve the country's resources the government, on November 14, had established the Gold Monopoly Institute for the purchase abroad of gold bullion, dust and scrap.²³ Imports of worked and half-finished gold were made subject to licenses issued by the Ministry of Finance after approval by the Superintendent of Exchange. The Bank of Italy, acting for the Gold Monopoly Institute, began to purchase gold at the rate of 15.50 lire per gramme, instead of 12.63, the legal parity price, the difference being regarded in the nature of a premium. The government denied that this premium implied official devaluation of the lira, stating that, as a result of the League's economic "siege," Italy merely had for the time being a currency differing in value on domestic and foreign markets.

At the same time, the Fascist government indicated that it intended to prosecute the Ethiopian campaign with renewed vigor, in the hope of winning decisive victories and obtaining a favorable peace settlement. On November 17 General de Bono, a veteran Fascist and one of the four leaders of the 1922 March on Rome, was recalled from his post as High Commissioner in East Africa and promoted to the rank of Marshal. He was succeeded by Marshal Badoglio, chief of the Italian general staff and a close friend of King Victor Emmanuel, regarded as hostile to Fascism. De Bono's recall was credited to friction between the Fascist Black Shirt militia, placed under his direct orders, and the regular army on the southern front, commanded by General Graziani. It was also believed that de Bono's cautious tactics had been too slow to satisfy Mussolini's desire for a rapid and spectacular drive; Marshal Badoglio, a younger man, was expected to press for successful conclusion of the conflict before the beginning of the rainy season in June.

EFFECT OF SANCTIONS ON ITALY

The extent to which Italy's ability to carry out its military program had been affected by League sanctions was at first difficult to gauge, particularly because the government suspended publication of

trade statistics and Bank of Italy statements. Psychologically, the immediate effect of sanctions was to strengthen rather than weaken the government, and to rally the people in a patriotic determination to defy the League "siege" by economic heroism. The task of national resistance was facilitated by Fascist control of industry, agriculture and foreign trade, which permitted rapid adjustments. The country experienced no marked shortage of food-stuffs, partly because quality fruits and vegetables previously sent abroad now became available at low prices. The branches of economy most effected by sanctions were those working primarily for export—such as the Fiat automobile plant in Turin or the orange and lemon growers of Sicily. Loss of foreign markets, however, was temporarily offset by government orders for trucks, automobiles and other machinery to be used in East Africa, and by purchases of citrous fruits for the army. The most serious problem faced by industry was that of replenishing stocks of raw materials, most of which had to be purchased abroad with foreign currency. Imports were cut to the bone, and foreign currency resources, sharply curtailed by the League boycott on Italian exports, were used chiefly to buy raw materials needed for war purposes. In an effort to utilize all available domestic resources, the government encouraged the substitution of synthetic alcohol and vegetable oils for gasoline, developed previously neglected coal deposits, and called for contributions of old iron and other metals, as well as gold in all forms—notably wedding rings. It was estimated that gifts of gold, presented at elaborate ceremonies throughout the country, provided the Treasury with a billion or more lire.

As long as the League did not extend its original sanctions, the Fascist government seemed ready to withstand the "siege," and content to stop at economic reprisals. The possibility that the League might go further and impose an embargo on oil created a different situation. Oil is the real sinews of the Italian army in East Africa, peculiarly dependent on motorized transportation and airplane attack, and 90 per cent of Italy's oil imports comes from League countries. An oil embargo might force Italy to abandon the Ethiopian campaign without obtaining any reward for its sacrifices, even in the form of heightened national prestige. This eventuality led Mussolini to threaten Britain and France with military reprisals. While his threats were dismissed in some quarters as mere bluff or the defiance of a would-be suicide, they gave some measure of the despair which the Italian people might experience if balked in its attempt at expansion. The very fact that oil sanctions might

22. *Corriere della Sera*, November 11, 1935.

23. The Association of Italian Corporations, *Business and Financial Report, A Monthly Survey of Italian Trade and Industry*, December 1, 1935.

effectively terminate the conflict increased the danger of Italian retaliation. This danger squarely raised the question whether the League states were ready to take the risk that an oil embargo might precipitate general war.

MANEUVERING FOR PEACE

On November 23, a week before the League Committee of Eighteen was to convene in Geneva to consider an embargo on oil, coal, iron and steel, the British Ambassador in Paris, Sir George Clerk, assisted by Mr. Peterson, resumed peace negotiations with the French government.²⁴ Renewal of diplomatic activity was apparently prompted by Mussolini's warning that any attempt to interfere with Italy's oil supply would be regarded as a hostile act creating the danger of European war. This warning²⁵ crystallized M. Laval's determination to avoid a measure which might extend the area of conflict and cripple one of France's potential allies against Germany. M. Laval believed that if France and Britain could devise a workable peace plan, it would be immediately accepted by Mussolini, and that once negotiations had been launched the British might be induced, if not to suspend sanctions altogether, at least to abandon the oil embargo. Pleading the necessity of remaining in Paris for a series of important Chamber debates on domestic questions, M. Laval, on November 24, requested postponement of the League Committee.²⁶ The British acquiesced and the meeting, scheduled for November 29, was postponed to December 12.²⁷

Britain's action was dictated less by consideration for M. Laval's political difficulties, believed to be genuine, than by fear that an oil embargo might provoke Italy to commit a "mad dog act" and produce an irreparable split between France and Britain, thus destroying the League system. Brought face to face with the risk that oil sanctions might precipitate war, the Baldwin government, which had not hesitated to send the bulk of its fleet into the Mediterranean in September without waiting for a League decision, apparently suffered an attack of nerves at the thought that Britain might be left alone to bear the brunt of Italian retaliation. This prospect seemed particularly disturbing at a

time when trouble was brewing in Egypt, Japan had resumed its drive in China, threatening British interests, and Germany demanded a free hand in Eastern Europe as well as return of its colonies. Britain's perplexities were increased rather than diminished by indications that the United States, whose possible non-participation had previously justified the League's reluctance to embargo oil, might limit oil exports to Italy. These problems were fully analyzed by Sir Samuel Hoare on December 19, when during his post-mortem of the Paris deal he told the House of Commons:²⁸

"It was clear that a new situation was about to be created by the question of the oil embargo. It seemed clear that, supposing an oil embargo were to be imposed and that the non-member states took an effective part in it, the oil embargo might have such an effect upon the hostilities as to force their termination. Just because of the effectiveness of the oil sanction, provided that the non-member states had a full part in it, the situation immediately became more dangerous from the point of view of Italian resistance. From all sides we received reports that no responsible government could disregard, that Italy would regard the oil embargo as a military sanction or act involving war against them."

Britain, he declared amid cheers, had no fear whatever of Italian threats so far as its own defense was concerned. "If the Italians attacked us we should retaliate, and, judging from our past history, we should retaliate with full success. What was in our mind was something very different—that an isolated attack of this kind launched upon one power without, it may be, the full support of the other powers, would, it seemed to me, almost inevitably lead to the dissolution of the League." Yet he made it abundantly clear that Britain's apprehension was aroused primarily not by concern for the League's future, but by the failure of other League powers to take military precautions against Italian aggression. "Not a ship, not a machine, not a man," he said, had been moved by League states, which contented themselves with protestations of loyalty to the Covenant. Without active cooperation, Sir Samuel declared, collective security was impossible, nor was it possible to have "a more than unsatisfactory peace. You cannot have a 100 per cent peace if you have only got 5 per cent cooperation that goes to the making of it."

It was in this atmosphere of anxiety and disillusion that Sir Samuel Hoare, who had been ordered by his doctors to take a much-delayed holiday and felt "in urgent need" of rest, was pressed by his cabinet colleagues, "in such a way as to make refusal impossible," to stop in Paris on his way to

24. *The Times*, November 21, 1935.

25. *Ibid.*, November 24, 1935.

26. *Ibid.*, November 25, 1935.

27. *Ibid.*, November 30, 1935. The situation was further complicated on December 1 when the Canadian government, headed by Prime Minister Mackenzie King, disclaimed responsibility for the suggestion made at Geneva by its representative, Mr. W. A. Riddell, regarding extension of the League embargo to oil, coal, iron and steel.

28. Great Britain, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Vol. 307, No. 16, December 19, 1935 (London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1935), p. 2004-2005.

Switzerland for an interview with M. Laval.²⁹ He accepted this assignment with the utmost reluctance. Yet he believed that failure to take military precautions against Italy made it imperative to open peace negotiations, even on a basis he might consider unsatisfactory.³⁰ Sir Samuel's comments on the unpreparedness of the League states raises the question whether Britain itself, when it took the lead at Geneva in September, expected to apply military sanctions, or merely hoped to "muddle through" and, by a show of naval force, bluff Mussolini into abandoning the Ethiopian campaign. That the use of military sanctions, and even of economic measures which might provoke war, had never been contemplated by France and Britain was asserted by M. Laval in an address broadcast on November 26.³¹

"From the beginning," he said, "we were in agreement over the avoidance of military sanctions as well as any measures likely to lead to a naval blockade." He contended that sanctions were not the only method of stopping war, and that France and Britain "should persevere in their efforts to reach that peace which is their common goal." With a gesture in the direction of Rome, he said he was hopeful "that in due course it will not be a vain appeal that we shall make to the conciliatory spirit of Signor Mussolini." Speed in negotiating peace was essential to the welfare of Europe. "We must find, and find as rapidly as possible, a just and honorable solution which will conciliate the principles of the Covenant with the interests of Italy." Then Italy, France and Britain would be able "to take up the work which was begun at Stresa and offered such rich hopes."

Instead of making the conciliatory move expected by M. Laval, the Italian government announced on November 27 that, in view of the proposed oil embargo, it had ordered certain troop movements and suspended the three months' leave granted to a number of soldiers serving with the colors.³² This announcement was interpreted as a warning that Italy would take an extremely serious view of the oil embargo, and might retaliate against France as well as Britain. The sentiment was increasingly expressed in Rome that if Italy had to perish it would, like Samson, involve the rest of the world in its downfall.³³

The Italian troop movements, combined with

Signor Cerruti's warning of serious consequences, stiffened France's attitude toward Italy. On November 28—following a consultation with Sir George Clerk—M. Laval informed the Italian Ambassador that, if Italy attacked British forces following application of a League decision, "France would instantly range herself on the side of Great Britain."³⁴ This declaration had an immediate effect. On November 29 it was stated in Rome that no troop movements had taken place on the Italo-French frontier, M. Laval was praised as a friend of Italy and a defender of European peace,³⁵ and Signor Cerruti informed the French Prime Minister that the Italian government would consider the oil embargo as an "unfriendly," but not a hostile act.³⁶

Mussolini's less intransigent attitude encouraged French hopes of a peace settlement. On December 1 M. Laval, through Signor Cerruti, urged *Il Duce* to take the initiative in opening negotiations, warning him that otherwise France would be obliged to support the oil embargo at Geneva.³⁷ The Paris press, seconding the government, made it clear that if Italy gave definite evidence of a conciliatory spirit, France would be able to urge the League not to put on the screws of oil sanctions.³⁸ At that time, as far as can be ascertained, the French and British experts working in Paris had reached no agreement regarding a basis for negotiations, largely because M. Laval refused to consider any proposals which, in his opinion, would be rejected by Mussolini.³⁹ Nor had the French Prime Minister given Britain any direct intimation of the course he would follow with respect either to the oil embargo or the peace negotiations, both of which were to be discussed during Sir Samuel's visit to Paris, scheduled for December 7.⁴⁰

The British cabinet met on December 2, the day before the opening of the new Parliament. Contrary to expectations in some quarters, no decision was reached regarding the oil embargo. It was "strongly felt by Ministers" that the period before December 12 "may well be spent in looking for a possible basis of peace and that no useful purpose would be served by taking decisions which have not yet to be put into operation." It was expected, however, that "as long as other nations are prepared to take

29. *Ibid.*, p. 2005.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Le Temps*, November 28, 1935; *The Times*, November 27, 1935.

32. *The Times*, November 29, 1935.

33. *The Times*, November 28, 1935; Sylvia Saunders, "This Italy," *The New Statesman and Nation*, December 21, 1935, p. 969; Blandine Ollivier, "Lettre de Rome," *L'Europe Nouvelle*, December 7, 1935, p. 1181.

34. *The Times*, November 29, 1935.

35. *Popolo di Roma* (Rome), November 29, 1935; *The Times*, November 30, 1935.

36. *The Times*, November 30, 1935.

37. *Ibid.*, December 2, 1935.

38. "L'Italie et la Société des Nations," *Le Temps*, December 1, 1935.

39. *The Times*, December 4, 1935.

40. *Ibid.*

a similar line, Great Britain will be prepared to extend the embargo to oil and other fuels."⁴¹

That Sir Samuel Hoare, while doubting the possibility of effecting a satisfactory peace, was determined to press for an agreement before the meeting of the League Committee of Eighteen, was indicated during the House of Commons debate on the address from the throne on December 5, when he said:⁴²

"It may be that we are engaged upon a hopeless task. It may be that it is impossible to reconcile the divergent aims of Italy, Abyssinia and the League. . . . None the less, the French and we intend not only to go on trying but to redouble our efforts during the short period of time that is still open before the Geneva meeting. The world urgently needs peace. We and the French, acting on behalf of the League, and in the spirit of the League, are determined to make another great effort for peace. We have no wish to humiliate Italy or to weaken it. Indeed we are most anxious to see a strong Italy in the world, an Italy that is strong, morally, physically, and socially, and that is able to contribute to the world valuable assistance." He appealed to Mussolini and the Italian people to dismiss "the suggestion that we have sinister motives behind our support of the League" and "the suspicion that we wish to drive a wedge between Italy and France." This appeal, he said, "is no sign of weakness; it is evidence solely of our desire to end as soon as possible a controversy that is embittering the world While . . . we must all recognize the formidable character of the obstacles in our path, we must not despair of surmounting them, and we must make a particular effort to surmount them in the course of the next few days and the next few weeks."

This statement makes it difficult to accept the explanation of Viscount Halifax, Lord Privy Seal, in the House of Lords on December 19, when he said, defending the cabinet:

"On his way abroad he [Hoare] went to Paris. There was very little pre-designed about it. He was passing through Paris, and it was natural that he should meet the French Prime Minister. He did not go there to discuss terms of conciliation; he went to discuss matters, quite other, connected with the Italo-Abyssinian dispute, and consequently, not going to discuss peace terms with M. Laval, he went with no instructions as to possible terms of conciliation from his colleagues in His Majesty's Government."⁴³

Evidence from British sources tends to indicate, on the contrary, that the Baldwin government was

not only fully acquainted with the progress of the negotiations conducted by Mr. Peterson in Paris, but may even have contributed the framework of the preliminary peace plan, with the French Prime Minister acting, in a sense, as Mussolini's *alter ego* in mediating between Italy and Britain. It would appear that on December 4 M. Laval submitted a set of proposals to Signor Cerruti, in the hope of obtaining *Il Duce's* acceptance before the arrival of Sir Samuel Hoare, and thus winning a reprieve from oil sanctions.⁴⁴ These proposals, which according to the British press had originated in London, bore a close resemblance to the ill-fated Hoare-Laval plan.⁴⁵ They provided for an exchange of territories, by which Ethiopia was to receive a port in Italian Eritrea, possibly Assab, and a corridor, "presumably for the construction of a road or railway," linking the port with the Ethiopian hinterland; while Italy was to obtain territory in the northeast, including Adowa but not Aksum, and special economic advantages in the southwest.⁴⁶

M. Laval expected prompt acceptance of these proposals in Rome. Mussolini, however, had little desire to take the initiative, fearing this might be interpreted as a sign of weakness. His speech of December 7 in the Chamber of Deputies, which constituted a reply both to Sir Samuel Hoare's appeal for conciliation and to the peace proposals, was not calculated to comfort M. Laval. While admitting that the international situation had slightly improved, Mussolini warned the Chamber against premature optimism. He rejected as "inopportune" exhortations that Italy should reveal its "irreducible exigencies." The proposals he was ready to consider had already been conveyed to France on October 16.⁴⁷ The Ethiopian crisis, he insisted, could end only by a "full recognition of our rights and the safeguarding of our interests in Africa."⁴⁸

Mussolini's speech produced a painful impression in Paris. His reference to the October 16 proposals was thought to leave little margin for eventual compromise. At the same time the French government appears to have believed that, since Italy refused to take the initiative, the alternative was not an oil embargo, which might terminate the Ethiopian war—or precipitate a European conflict—but a fresh offer by France and Britain.⁴⁹ When Sir Samuel Hoare arrived in Paris on Saturday, De-

44. *The Times*, December 5, 1935.

45. *Ibid.*, December 6, 1935.

46. For a summary of these proposals, cf. *ibid.*

47. For summary of these proposals, cf. p. 318-19.

48. For complete text, cf. *Corriere della Sera*, December 8, 1935; *The Times*, December 9, 1935.

49. "Le Discours du Duce et L'Entretien Laval-Hoare," *Le Temps*, December 9, 1935.

41. *Ibid.*, December 3, 1935.

42. *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, cited, Vol. 307, No. 6, December 5, 1935, p. 345.

43. *Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords*, Vol. 99, No. 9, December 19, 1935 (London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1935), p. 278.

cember 7, M. Laval apparently convinced him that the situation, which the British Foreign Secretary already regarded as threatening, called for prompt and drastic action. He intimated that, while France remained loyal to its earlier promise of assistance in case the British fleet were attacked by Italy as a result of sanctions, the French navy could not be put on a war footing in less than fifteen days. He hinted, moreover, that if Mussolini rejected the proposals he intended to elaborate with Sir Samuel, France would go ahead with an oil embargo.⁵⁰

Whether, as suggested by the British press, Sir Samuel, already physically shaken, was stampeded by M. Laval into an agreement he would not have considered in normal circumstances, or was personally convinced that war could be averted only by a final effort for peace negotiations, it is at present impossible to say with any certainty. It is a matter of record, however, that the British Foreign Secretary, who had originally intended to spend only a few hours in Paris—perhaps merely to receive Mussolini's acceptance, optimistically expected by M. Laval—agreed "at great personal sacrifice of convenience and health"⁵¹ to remain another twenty-four hours.⁵² It was during those twenty-four hours that the proposals previously considered and, it must be supposed, approved by the Baldwin cabinet underwent the change which made them no longer acceptable to Sir Samuel's colleagues. Mr. Baldwin subsequently declared that "lack of liaison" over the traditional British week-end had prevented the cabinet from learning the terms before Monday morning.⁵³ According to *Le Temps*, the Paris negotiations were suspended on Sunday, December 8, at 12:40 p.m., when Sir Samuel returned to the British Embassy and telephoned London to acquaint "the head of the British cabinet with the progress of the conversations."⁵⁴ Other sources indicate that Sir Samuel may have failed to obtain a telephone connection. Negotiations were resumed that afternoon and concluded in the evening with

an official communiqué, in which Hoare and Laval announced they were satisfied with the results of their search for a peace settlement.⁵⁵ This settlement, according to Hoare, represented "the minimum basis upon which the French government were prepared to proceed."⁵⁶ The communiqué added that "there could be no question at present of publishing" these proposals, of which the British government had not yet been informed.

Before leaving for his holiday in Switzerland, Sir Samuel Hoare asked the British correspondents in Paris not to divulge the terms of the proposals if they learned them, and M. Laval addressed a similar plea to French journalists. According to one account, some of the British, who already knew the terms, dispatched them together with Sir Samuel's request, and no information appeared in the British press.⁵⁷ Nor did semi-official French organs like *Le Temps* give any inkling of the deal—contrary to the initial impression in Britain that M. Laval had purposely arranged a "leakage" to confront the Baldwin government with a *fait accompli*.⁵⁸ The terms of the Hoare-Laval plan were revealed in full on Monday morning, December 9, by *L'Echo de Paris* and *L'Oeuvre*, two Paris dailies which, while differing on all other political questions, were at one in having distinguished diplomatic correspondents hostile to M. Laval's foreign policy—André Géraud (*Pertinax*) and Mme. Geneviève Tabouis.

This "leakage" set off a train of dramatic consequences culminating in the resignation of Sir Samuel Hoare. Mr. Baldwin received a full account of the Paris week-end at breakfast time on Monday from Mr. Peterson, Britain's Ethiopian expert. This account was accompanied by a letter from Sir Samuel, "urging that the cabinet might endorse what he had done, as he believed it to be a necessary piece of work at the moment."⁵⁹ Almost immediately afterward, said the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on December 19, "and before we had had time to study the documents, the leakage took place." None of the Ministers, according to Mr. Baldwin, liked the Hoare-Laval proposals—although they were reported to have won the approval of Ramsay MacDonald, J. H. Thomas and Walter Runciman. "We thought they went too far . . . We did not like the framework that had come over

50. *The Times*, December 12, 16, 1935.

51. Viscount Halifax, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, December 19, 1935, cited, p. 278.

52. *Ibid.*; *The Times*, December 9, 1935.

53. Cf. Mr. Baldwin's speech in the House of Commons, December 19, 1935, *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, December 19, 1935, cited, p. 2029. During the debate in the House of Lords on December 19, 1935, Viscount Cecil said it was extraordinary that neither the telephone nor the telegraph had been used during the week-end negotiations. Earl Stanhope, in reply, said that "it did not seem at the time necessary to do anything of the kind." Viscount Cecil: "I am anxious to get information on this because it has puzzled me so much. Do I understand that there were communications on Saturday and Sunday?" Earl Stanhope: "No." *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, cited, p. 346.

54. *Le Temps*, December 9, 1935.

55. For text of communiqué, cf. *ibid.*, December 9, 1935; *The Times*, December 9, 1935.

56. Cf. speech of Sir Samuel Hoare in the House of Commons, December 19, 1935, cited.

57. Critic, "A London Diary," *The New Statesman and Nation*, December 28, 1935, p. 1006.

58. *The Times*, December 13, 1935 (editorial, "The Way Out").

59. Mr. Baldwin's speech in the House of Commons, December 19, 1935, cited.

from Paris in which these proposals were contained—that is to say, the language—and we would have liked to modify it.”⁶⁰ He did not indicate, however, to what extent or on what points these proposals departed from those presumably considered by the cabinet before Sir Samuel’s departure for Paris.

Time was short. Confronted by the Paris leakage, which was bound to arouse a host of embarrassing questions in Parliament, the cabinet had to choose promptly among three alternatives: it might have recalled Sir Samuel for more ample explanation of his action; it might have repudiated the proposals; or it might have accepted them in principle to save the reputation of a colleague absent for reasons of ill-health. Mr. Baldwin dismissed the first alternative, “because I knew how necessary rest” was for Sir Samuel Hoare,⁶¹ and chose the third as the only sportsmanlike thing to do.

THE AFTERMATH

On December 9 the British cabinet, summoned in the morning, held a meeting at 6 p.m. Earlier in the day Mr. Baldwin had declared in the House of Commons that the documents brought from Paris were receiving “urgent attention.” In spite of the Paris leakage, which furnished details of the Hoare-Laval agreement, the British government decided that no official statement should be made, and refused either to confirm or deny the Paris reports. Mr. Eden, according to press reports, had threatened to resign, but was persuaded to remain at his post. The cabinet apparently agreed that the proposals should be forwarded to the League, Mussolini and Haile Selassie; “but it cannot be recorded that there was any enthusiasm for them.” It was hoped that responsibility for decision “had now been transferred to Geneva.”⁶²

Following the cabinet meeting, Captain Eden telephoned Paris and communicated the government’s decision. This communication, “prolonged till a late hour,” concerned not the substance of the proposals but the procedure to be followed in submitting them to the combatants. The British cabinet insisted on two points: the proposals should be simultaneously dispatched to Rome and Addis Ababa—not, as M. Laval had apparently wished, first submitted to Mussolini; and no conditions were to be made in advance regarding postponement or abandonment of economic sanctions, as desired by M. Laval.⁶³ These changes, which brought the procedure into outward conformity with the

British formula that solution of the conflict should be acceptable not only to Italy, but to Ethiopia and the League, received the French government’s consent on December 10, and the draft proposals were forwarded that night to Rome and Addis Ababa.⁶⁴ The French press, with the exception of that of the Left, declared that *Il Duce* would negotiate on these terms “unless he had lost his reason,” pointing out that the Hoare-Laval deal differed little from Mussolini’s demands of October 16. *Il Duce*, however, remained non-committal. On December 9, before the proposals had been received in Rome, he merely told the Senate it could rest assured “that the interests of Italy in Africa and in Europe will be strenuously defended.”⁶⁵

In Britain the storm of protest aroused by reports of the Hoare-Laval terms continued unabated. Members of Parliament—Conservatives as well as Liberals and Laborites—were deluged with letters from indignant constituents protesting against what they considered a betrayal of the League by a government which only three weeks earlier had been returned to power on a platform supporting collective security. The press, with the exception of the isolationist Beaverbrook and Rothermere organs, attacked the proposals on the ground that they jeopardized collective security by rewarding a declared aggressor, and destroyed the prestige which Britain had acquired in Europe and the Dominions by its championship of the League. Mr. Baldwin, however, made as yet no attempt to defend his government’s policy. According to the Prime Minister, neither he nor his colleagues had any idea that they were “not being true to every pledge that we had given in the election.”⁶⁶ Mr. Baldwin was not “expecting that deeper feeling which was manifested by many of my honorable friends in many parts of the country on what I may call the ground of conscience and of honor.” On December 10 he told the House of Commons: “I have seldom spoken with greater regret, for my lips are not yet unsealed. Were these troubles over I would make a case, and I would guarantee that not a man would go into the lobby against us.” He hinted at the possibility that Britain might have to effect a strategic retreat from the advanced position it had taken at Geneva. Failure of the League, he said, would not be a reason for despair but merely “an incentive to try to do better next time.” Reality, he hinted, fell short of international ideals. “We are learning and have learned a great deal in the

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*

62. *The Times*, December 10, 1935.

63. *Ibid.*, December 11, 1935.

64. *Ibid.*

65. *Corriere della Sera*, December 10, 1935.

66. Cf. speech of Mr. Baldwin in the House of Commons, December 19, 1935, cited.

last three months as to what is possible at present in the world and what is not. If nothing results, we shall have to try again later by and by." He emphasized that the government had no intention of taking unilateral action against Italy, and that Mr. Eden was going to Geneva on December 12 not to enforce a peace settlement but merely to submit it for League consideration.⁶⁷

THE TERMS OF THE HOARE-LAVAL DEAL

The Hoare-Laval proposals were received by Mussolini on December 11, and by the Ethiopian Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs on December 13;⁶⁸ only on December 13 were they submitted to the League. They provided for an "exchange of territories" under which Ethiopia was to cede outright 60,000 square miles in return for a corridor of 3,000 square miles through Italian Eritrea, including the port of Assab. In addition, Britain and France were "to use their influence at Addis Ababa and Geneva" to secure the formation in Southern Ethiopia of an Italian zone of economic expansion and settlement totaling 160,000 square miles, for which Ethiopia was to receive no territorial *quid pro quo*. In this zone Italy was to enjoy "exclusive economic rights," to be exercised by a "privileged company" which would acquire all unoccupied lands and a monopoly of exploiting mines, forests and other natural resources. This company would be "obliged" to contribute to the economic "equipment" of the country and to expend a portion of its revenue for the benefit of the natives. The Italian zone was to remain an "integral part of Ethiopia" but to be controlled by League "services" in which Italy was to play "a preponderant but not exclusive rôle." Questions concerning administration of the zone were to be handled by one of the principal League advisers, "who might be of Italian nationality," and who would act as assistant to the chief League adviser at Addis Ababa. The League services throughout Ethiopia "would regard it as one of their essential duties to insure the safety of Italian subjects and the free development of their enterprises." The proposals addressed to Haile Selassie pointed out that the Emperor had already accepted the Committee of Five scheme for League services as extending over the whole of his country.^{68a}

It was first reported that, during the Paris nego-

tiations, it had been agreed that Ethiopia should not have the right to build a railway through the proposed corridor, which was to remain "a corridor for camels."⁶⁹ This was denied by Sir Samuel Hoare on December 19, when he said that "no stipulation was discussed concerning any restriction upon it as to the building of a railway."⁷⁰ Such a stipulation was apparently to be made only if Ethiopia were offered, instead of Assab, the British port of Zeila and a corridor through British Somaliland, because "a long-standing arrangement" between France, Britain and Ethiopia provided that no railway should be built through British territory which would compete with the French railway to Jibuti.⁷¹

In communicating the Paris proposals to Rome, the British Foreign Office told Sir Eric Drummond that "M. Laval and Sir Samuel Hoare are anxious to make sure that Signor Mussolini would accept this basis of negotiation in principle without prejudice to the result of the discussions which would subsequently take place." They hoped that the Italian reply would reach them "within a period which in view of the imminence of the meetings at Geneva may be as short as possible. If, as they hope, this reply in principle is favorable, the French and United Kingdom Governments will immediately take the necessary steps in order that the Committee of Five may be called together on December 12. In that case the meeting of the Committee might modify the object of the meeting of the Committee of Eighteen which is fixed for the same day. Sir Samuel Hoare and M. Pierre Laval attach the greatest importance to learning at the same time from Signor Mussolini whether he is ready to arrange for the collaboration of the Italian government with the Committee of Five." Should the suggestion that Italy cede Assab to Ethiopia "present objections which in your view might militate against the acceptance of our proposals, you may add that failing such an arrangement, the Government of the United Kingdom and the French Government are prepared to facilitate Ethiopia's access to the sea in the manner which they stated to the Committee of Five"—that is, by cession of a port and connecting territory in French or British Somaliland.

67. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Commons, Vol. 307, No. 9, December 10, 1935, p. 852-856.

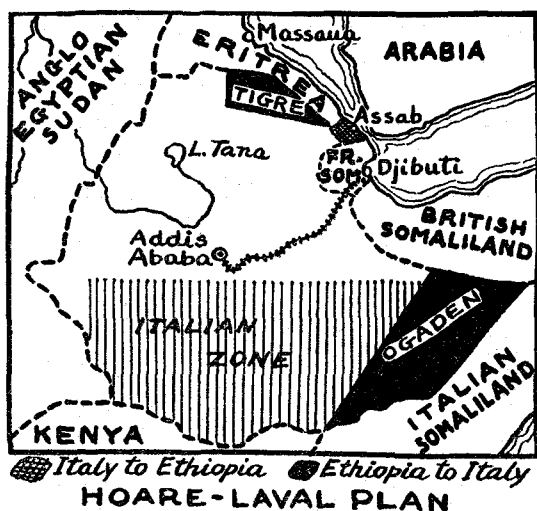
68. For the text of the proposals, cf. telegrams addressed by Sir Samuel Hoare to Sir Eric Drummond, British Ambassador in Rome, and Sir Sidney Barton, British Minister in Addis Ababa, on December 10, 1935. Great Britain, *Documents Relating to the Dispute between Ethiopia and Italy*, Ethiopia No. 1 (1935) (London, His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1935), Cmd. 5044, p. 13, 16.

68a. For analysis of the Committee of Five scheme, cf. Vera Micheles Dean, "The League and the Italo-Ethiopian Crisis," *Foreign Policy Reports*, November 6, 1935.

69. "A Corridor for Camels," *The Times*, December 16, 1935.

70. Cf. Sir Samuel Hoare's speech in the House of Commons on December 19, 1935, cited.

71. Statement by Earl Stanhope, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, December 19, 1935. *Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords, December 19, 1935, cited, p. 349.



The British government's instructions to Sir Sidney Barton were substantially like those dispatched to Sir Eric Drummond. They were followed, however, on December 10 by a telegram fundamentally different from the appeal addressed to Mussolini. "You should use your utmost influence," Sir Sidney was told by the Foreign Secretary, "to induce the Emperor to give careful and favorable consideration to these proposals and on no account lightly to reject them. On the contrary, I feel sure that he will give further proof of his statesmanship by realizing the advantage of the opportunity of negotiation which they afford and will avail himself thereof."⁷²

Although Signor Cerruti had apparently assured M. Laval on December 11 that Mussolini's reply would be favorable, *Il Duce* continued to give no intimation of the course he might follow. Ethiopia, meanwhile, made no effort to disguise its indignation. On December 11, before the proposals had reached Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian Minister in Paris, M. Wolde Mariam, issued a protest stating that his government was "firmly resolved to set aside any proposals which, directly or indirectly, would offer a reward to the Italian aggressor; would disregard the fundamental principles affirmed by the League Council and its committees as well as the Assembly, in particular the principle of Ethiopian territorial and political integrity; and would tend to put pressure on a weak nation to accept the domination of a powerful Government who have never ceased to declare that they will assure by force the triumph of their ambitions, with, without, or against the League of Nations."⁷³

72. Great Britain, *Documents Relating to the Dispute between Ethiopia and Italy*, Ethiopia No. 1 (1935), cited, p. 19.

73. *The Times*, December 12, 1935.

This protest was followed on December 12 by a letter from M. Mariam to the Secretary-General of the League. The Ethiopian government, before replying to the Hoare-Laval proposals, urgently requested immediate convocation of the League Assembly, "in order that, by a full and free public debate, conducted frankly in the face of the world, free from all pressure, direct or indirect, every member-state should be enabled to express its opinion on the true practical significance of the proposals submitted to Ethiopia, and on the general problem of the conditions which are indispensable if a settlement between the victim of a properly established act of aggression and the aggressor Government is not in practice to result in destroying the League of Nations, by bringing final ruin upon the system of guaranteed collective security provided for by the Covenant."⁷⁴

The Secretary-General replied on December 13 that, as the League Council had been summoned for December 19 to consider the proposals, and "as it remains under the Covenant the organ to which the dispute has been duly submitted," the President of the Assembly considered it advisable to await the result of the Council's deliberations before taking further action.⁷⁵

Sir Samuel Hoare and M. Laval had apparently intended at first to present their proposals not to the League Council, where the small powers, opposed to the deal, would be in a majority, but to the Committee of Five, which had been kept in existence after Italy's rejection of its recommendations in September. This course, which might have enabled France and Britain to steamroller their scheme through the League, was opposed by Mr. Eden, as well as by Poland and Turkey, two of the small powers represented on the Committee of Five, and it was agreed to summon the Council for December 19.⁷⁶

Meanwhile, on December 12, in the Committee of Eighteen, M. Laval had declared that, once the proposals had been submitted to the Council, the task of France and Britain would be at an end, and it would be for the League itself "to decide what is to be done."⁷⁷ Mr. Eden made every effort to relieve his government of further responsibility for the proposals. What Hoare and Laval had

74. League of Nations, C.483.M.259.1935.VII., Geneva, December 13, 1935. On December 18 the Ethiopian government addressed to the League of Nations a statement commenting on the Paris proposals. League of Nations, C.491.M.265.1935.VII., Geneva, December 18, 1935.

75. *Ibid.*

76. *The Times*, December 13, 1935.

77. *Ibid.*

sought to do in Paris, he said, was to work out a plan "that might be submitted to both sides and upon which both sides might be willing to come together to open discussion here at Geneva The proposals now put forward are neither definitive nor sacrosanct Any final settlement must be acceptable to the League as well as to the two parties in conflict." It would be for the Council to determine the course to follow. "And in advance I emphasize that so far as the British government are concerned, we will not only readily accept the judgment of our colleagues, but we will continue to use our best efforts to further the two objectives which have been constantly before us in this dispute—the restoration of peace and the maintenance of the authority of the League."⁷⁸

Although Mexico, Rumania and the Soviet Union had indicated that they were willing to impose an oil embargo provided non-League members did likewise, the Committee of Eighteen decided on December 12 to postpone action on this measure so as not to hamper the Council's examination of the Paris proposals.⁷⁹ That M. Laval would oppose oil sanctions until the peace plan had been rejected by Mussolini was revealed on December 17 when, defending the Paris deal in the Chamber of Deputies, he repeated that "even before hostilities began we came to an agreement with the British government to apply no military sanctions, and to take no measure which might lead to a naval blockade. In brief, we have avoided everything which might provoke an extension of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict in Europe."⁸⁰ With regard to some of the measures of economic pressure which were "the most severe among them, I recall expressing the wish that they should not be put into effect until after the failure, by the fault of Italy, should it occur, of a new attempt at conciliation." The Paris proposals "represented the limit" of Franco-British efforts. He insisted that the Hoare-Laval plan was inspired by the same principles as the Committee of Five scheme. Nor did he see what system was offered as an alternative. He asked his opponents of the Left whether they would wish to reverse the decision of Geneva "which never contemplated any but economic sanctions."

HOARE'S DEFENSE

M. Laval succeeded in obtaining a majority of 52 in the Chamber of Deputies. Far less fortunate

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*

80. France, *Journal Officiel, Débats Parlementaires*, No. 78, Chambre des Députés, 15^e Législature, Session Extraordinaire de 1935, 21^e Séance, p. 2647.

was the fate of his fellow negotiator. Sir Samuel Hoare, who had decided to return for the House of Commons debate on the Paris proposals, arrived in London on December 18 and that evening, following consultation with Mr. Baldwin, handed in his resignation as Foreign Secretary. This unexpected development was interpreted as evidence that the Prime Minister, hoping to placate public opinion and rally his disgruntled Conservative supporters, had decided to sacrifice Sir Samuel rather than face a parliamentary attack on the government's foreign policy. Sympathy for Sir Samuel was increased on December 19 when, disregarding his ill-health, he made a spirited defense of his action from the back benches in the House of Commons.⁸¹ After analyzing the situation which confronted him when he went to Paris, the former Foreign Secretary declared that there were only two ways of ending the war: "either peace by negotiation or peace by surrender." Peace by surrender would mean "the complete collapse of one or another of the belligerents." Peace by negotiation—which he believed inevitable—would have to be based on the three principles embodied in the Paris proposals: international supervision, territorial exchanges, and opportunities for Italian economic expansion and settlement. He defended these proposals—much as he "disliked some features of the scheme"—on the ground that they were "immensely less favorable to Italy" than the demands made by Mussolini in June and October 1935, when *Il Duce* had threatened "to wipe out the name of Abyssinia from the map." The failure of peace negotiations, he pointed out, had rendered the situation more acute. With the possibility of an oil embargo, the League states were entering a "danger zone." If drastic sanctions involving the risk of war were to be applied against Italy, then all League members must go beyond mere protestations of loyalty to the Covenant and take the necessary military precautions against Italian retaliation. Otherwise Britain might be forced either to wage a single-handed struggle with Italy, or else abandon Ethiopia to its fate, which might be far worse than if the British had never interfered in the conflict. In conclusion, he told the House that he could not "honestly recant," and sincerely believed that the course he had taken "was the only course that was possible in the circumstances."

Mr. Baldwin, who followed Sir Samuel, assured the House of Commons that it was "perfectly obvious" the proposals "are absolutely and completely dead," and that the government had no intention of resurrecting them. If the storm of public opinion

81. Cf. speech of Sir Samuel Hoare, December 19, 1935, cited.

showed him that, "however unconsciously," he had done "something that was not wise," then he would bow to it.⁸² In a further effort to appease public opinion, Mr. Eden, known for his attachment to League principles, was appointed Foreign Secretary on December 22.

Britain's decision to wash its hands of the Hoare-Laval deal cleared the way for action at Geneva. On December 19 the League Council decently buried the proposals in a resolution thanking the French and British delegates for communicating their suggestions, but refrained from comment as to their substance. "In view of the preliminary character of these suggestions," the Council did not consider called upon to express an opinion for the present. It administered an implied rebuke to France and Britain by instructing the Committee of Thirteen—composed of all Council members with the exception of Italy—to examine the situation "bearing in mind the provisions of the Covenant."⁸³

The prompt demise of the Paris proposals made acceptance or rejection by Italy superfluous. On December 18, in a speech inaugurating the reclaimed township of Pontinia, Mussolini had already declared that the proposals did not offer sufficient guarantees of Italian security in Ethiopia.⁸⁴ "We will not," he said, "send into distant and barbarous lands the flower of our race if we are not certain that it will be protected by the tricolor of the fatherland." The Ethiopian war was "a war of civilization and liberation," a war "of the poor, of the disinherited, of the proletariat. Against us is arrayed the front of conservatism, of selfishness, and of hypocrisy." A people of 44,000,000 "not merely of inhabitants, but of souls, does not allow itself to be throttled and still less tricked with impunity."

MEDITERRANEAN CONSULTATIONS

Mussolini's attitude was deplored by M. Laval on December 27, when in a full-dress Chamber debate on foreign policy he complained that "the Italian government has not brought to the examination of our suggestions the diligence and the comprehension which we had the right to expect."⁸⁶ M. Laval said he was haunted by the obsession that an inci-

dent might drag France into a war he had "done everything to avoid." The League, he warned, would condemn itself to failure if it refused to recognize the limits of its powers. On December 28, after he had been attacked both by the Left and by such moderate Right leaders as M. Paul Reynaud, he told the deputies that as "mandatories of the nation" they would have to take the responsibility for the consequences of an oil embargo.⁸⁷ At the same time, he endeavored to prove that he had conformed throughout with the letter of the Covenant. He assured the Chamber that he had worked in the closest collaboration with the British government, always on the understanding that France would be called on to give naval assistance only if Britain were attacked by Italy as a result of measures approved by the League. This understanding, embodied in the French note of October 18, had been followed by conversations between the British Admiralty and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which on December 10 had been extended to include the military and air staffs of the two countries. France, he claimed, was the only League state which had "made undertakings" and entered into "technical arrangements" with Britain.

The character of these Franco-British conversations was revealed in a memorandum submitted by Mr. Eden to the League Coordination Committee on January 22.⁸⁸ This memorandum stated that Britain, since October 18, had enjoyed a written pledge of French solidarity in the matter of military, air and naval assistance. This pledge had been given on the understanding that Britain would "not take the initiative in any measure against Italy which would not be in conformity with decisions taken or to be taken by the League of Nations in full agreement with France." The memorandum explained that the Franco-British conversations and the staff consultations "they have naturally entailed" had led to the suggestion "in certain quarters"—obviously Germany—that they were concerned not only with the Mediterranean but also with the Franco-German frontier. This the British categorically denied, stating that the staff consultations had been "confined entirely to the Mediterranean contingency."

The memorandum also stated that "early in December"—according to other sources, before the Hoare-Laval deal⁸⁹—Britain had addressed similar inquiries regarding naval assistance to Greece,

82. Cf. speech of Mr. Baldwin, December 19, 1935, cited.

83. League of Nations, *Official Journal*, Minutes of the Eighty-Ninth Session of the Council (Part II), December 18, 19, 1935, 17th Year, No. 1, January 1936, p. 14.

84. *Corriere della Sera*, December 19, 1935; *The Times*, December 20, 1935.

86. *Journal Officiel, Débats Parlementaires*, No. 83, Chambre des Députés, cited, 27e Séance, p. 2800.

87. *Ibid.*, No. 84, Chambre des Députés, 28e Séance, p. 2863.

88. League of Nations, *Dispute between Italy and Ethiopia, Coordination of Measures, Article XVI of the Covenant*, Coordination Committee/108, Geneva, January 22, 1935.

89. *New York Times*, December 21, 1935.

Turkey and Yugoslavia, whose replies "left no doubt of their readiness faithfully to apply all obligations" imposed by the League Covenant, and in return had received reciprocal assurances from the British. On December 21 the three Mediterranean countries had informed France and Italy of their action, while France had acquainted the Italian government with "the fact" that conversations had taken place between the French and British staffs.

In a note of January 24 addressed to both sanctionist and non-sanctionist League states, Mussolini firmly protested against the British memorandum of January 22.⁹⁰ He argued that League economic and financial sanctions had been applied not by League organs, but by member states acting on their individual responsibility, and that Britain, "a power outside of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict," was not justified in taking military precautions outside the League. By mobilizing its fleet in September, Britain had "adopted measures of an extraordinary character without informing the League," at a time when paragraph 3, Article XVI of the Covenant, providing for mutual assistance against an aggressor, had not yet been invoked. Britain's agreements with France, Greece, Turkey and Yugoslavia had been concluded "in anticipation of a hypothesis that the Italian government must consider not only arbitrary but completely non-existent," in view of its statement of October 2, 1935 that "it would do everything possible to insure that this conflict of colonial character would never assume the character and importance of a European conflict." Moreover, these agreements had been concluded between League states without the knowledge of Italy, a fellow member. "It cannot be in the best interest of European security," said Mussolini, nor in conformity with the spirit of the Covenant, "for the government of one state member of the League which is not a party to the controversy to take outside of any League decision certain individual initiatives and reach certain particular agreements of a military character of the nature of those now under discussion. Such initiative and such agreements in sectors outside of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict bring about, as actually has happened, an atmosphere of grave unrest, therefore representing a danger to European peace."

The possibility of reopening peace negotiations was examined by the Committee of Thirteen during the January session of the League Council. On January 22 the Committee reported that, if an opportunity "of facilitating and hastening the

90. For text, cf. *Corriere della Sera*, January 25, 1936.

settlement of the dispute through an agreement between the parties within the framework of the Covenant" had "existed today it would have at once submitted suggestions to the Council. It will not fail to do so should more favorable circumstances arise. At present it can only decide to watch the situation carefully, in accordance with the mandate which it received from the Council on December 19th."⁹¹ Conciliation efforts having failed, the Committee of Eighteen decided on January 22 to summon a conference of experts representing oil-producing and oil-transporting countries to report on the prospects of an embargo.

CONCLUSION

Prompt repudiation of the Hoare-Laval deal by public opinion demonstrated not only the influence of an aroused democracy but a more precise understanding of the nature of collective security. As a result of experience gained during the Ethiopian conflict, it is increasingly recognized that the collective system must be sufficiently strong to discourage aggression, yet sufficiently elastic to prevent its recurrence by timely concessions; that collective security implies collective responsibility; that League states, in applying sanctions, must act on collective—not individual—initiative and must bear a proportionate share of the sanctions burden; and that the collective system must be used not only to penalize aggression but to remove its causes by peaceful change.⁹² There is still serious dispute as to whether such change should be effected in the heat of battle, to placate the aggressor and prevent the spread of war, or only when aggression has been checked and peace restored; and whether it should be made at the expense of the intended victim, or as a sacrifice to peace by the international community as a whole. So far League states have been reluctant to apply sanctions which, by their very effectiveness in bringing war to an end, might provoke retaliation by the aggressor. Nor is it clear what action they would take should a victorious Italy extract from Ethiopia territorial concessions greater than those envisaged by the Hoare-Laval plan. These problems remain to be solved if the collective system, which has forged rapidly ahead during the past few months, is to develop into an effective alternative to war.

91. League of Nations, *Dispute between Ethiopia and Italy, Report by the Committee of Thirteen*, C.66.M.23.1936.VII., Geneva, January 22, 1936.

92. Cf. speech by Mr. Eden, British Foreign Secretary, to the Warwick and Leamington Employers' Association, January 17, 1936. *The Times*, January 18, 1936.

